

EXPLOITATION AND PROTECTION OF TURTLES AT SERANGAN AND TANJUNG BENOA VILLAGES SOUTH BALI IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The people at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages have a habit to kill turtles for sale, consumption, custom and religion. They were all restless when their habit was hegemonized by the government by applying the Act concerning scarce animal conservation. The people urged that they be provided with freedom in killing turtles, but the government still intends to stop killing turtles at the two villages. The two different interests have resulted in a controversy over the exploitation of turtles making the Bali community as a whole called the killers of turtles.

The title of this study is the Exploitation and Protection of Turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages, South Bali: in the Perspective of Cultural Studies. The subjects discussed are how the exploitation and protection of turtles implemented, what factors motivating their exploitation and protection, what meaningfulness is made to appear by their exploitation and protection.

Qualitative method was used. The data needed were collected by interview, observation, documentation of the secondary data. The data were descriptively and qualitatively analyzed using the theory of discourse, the theory of deconstruction, the theory of hegemony and the perspective of cultural studies.

The research findings show that before the Acts Number 7 and 8 of 1999 concerning conservation of scarce animals, exploitation of turtles was part of the people's life in South Bali. However, after 2005, such constitution has changed from being done in an extractive way to being done in a non-extractive way. Meaningfulness to turtles has also changed, from being exploited to being conserved. Such a conservation has been done by releasing *tukiks* (turtles' babies) to the sea. Since 2005, a change has also taken place with regard to the turtles killed for religious and traditional ceremonies. Formerly, many big turtles were used for religious and traditional ceremonies, but now only a few and small ones are used. If none is found, ducks are used to replace the turtles.

Key word: Exploitation, protection of turtles, meaningfulness, hegemony, and socio cultural transformation.

DISCUSSION

The people at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages have a habit to kill turtles for traditional and religious ceremonies, consumption, sales, and for handicraft. Before 2000, Serangan and Tanjung Bena villages were used as the places where boats carrying turtles transited, and buying and selling turtles took pace. Business in turtles was a promising one for the local people, because of such a business they could meet their needs. The highest took place in 1987, when Bali exported the most handicrafts made up of turtles. Such an increase in export and trade of turtles could not be separated from “the market ideology”, as global capitalism system integrated in globalization” (Piliang, 1998: 23). The market influence made turtles commercial commodities, which could be processed into various types of products leading to hyper- consumption.

Then the exploitation of turtles was reported in the meeting conducted by Union Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1987 in Ottawa Canada. It was suspected that every year 30,000 turtles were caught and killed from all the coastal areas of Indonesia where turtles lay eggs. Such a report made animal loving organizations criticized Indonesia (Bali) as the country, which killed a very great number of turtles. In 1990 the world sent its statement to the Governor of Bali through a letter entitled Slaughter in Paradise . The letter contained a threatening that tourism in Bali would be boycotted if the exploitation of turtles were not stopped.

The world’s criticism has caused the Indonesian government to apply the Act Number 5 of 1990, the Rules and Regulations Number 7 and 8 of 1999 and the Bali Governor’s Letter of Decision Number 240 concerning scarce animals including

turtles. The pressure and resolute step taken by the government has caused the people at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages to feel hegemonized in exploiting turtles, because turtles have been part of their lifestyle. The controversy whether to exploit or to protect turtles has resulted in effects on and meaningfulness to their exploitation and protection. This phenomenon deserves being investigated from the perspective of cultural studies. Therefore, the title of this dissertation is “Exploitation and Protection and Turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages, South Bali: in the Perspective of Cultural Studies”.

1. Exploitation and Protection of Turtles

Before 2000, turtles were exploited for trade, traditional activities, religious ceremonies and tourism at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages. The food products that were traded were *lawar*, *sate*, *komboh*, *srapah* and *kwah ares* (Balinese food products made from turtle’s meat). Such foods were sold in such a great quantity at restaurants and traditional stalls that hyper-consumption took place. In addition to selling food products, the people also sold handicrafts made of turtle’s eggshell. Such handicrafts were shown at small shops as souvenirs for the tourists. In 1978, Bali served as one of the centers where products made of turtles from Indonesia were exported. The people exported handicrafts made of turtles to Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the United States of America and sometimes to Belgium (Polunin and Nuitja, 1981: Suweto et al, 1991).

Turtles have been killed for Hindu-related religious ceremonies called *Panca Yadnya*. At the upper level ceremonies, a turtle’s head is put at *Sanggar Tawang* as the *puer*, while its meat is processed to make

lawar to be put on *Banten Suci* (holy offerings). As a tourist attraction, the turtles' babies are released to the sea. The babies are taken from the pools where turtles are looked after and their eggs are hatched. For traditional activities, turtles are generally killed for consumption for those who are involved in them. In addition, turtles killed for traditional activities are related to someone's social status in the society. The more turtles are killed for traditional and religious ceremonies, the higher someone's social status is. The more *sate* made from turtle's meat can be provided (*bayuh roras*) when religious and traditional activities are performed at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages the higher someone's social status is.

The protection of turtles is done at the pools particularly built for looking after turtles. At Serangan Village, there are two such pools. They are Taman Wisata Peny and TCEC. At Tanjung Bena Village there are Pudut Sari, Bulih Sari, Moncot Sari, Deluang Sari, and Lecha Ceria. In this way, the people can conserve turtles by releasing their *tukiks*, which are hatched in the pools where their mothers are looked after, to the sea. Such a protection is termed as non-extractive, meaning that the people indirectly conserve mature turtles living in the sea, because the turtles needed for ceremonies are taken from the pools where they are looked after.

2 Factors Causing Exploitation and Protection of Turtles

The factors causing the people to kill turtles are tradition, religious ceremonies and their commercial values. Before 2000, at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages turtles were killed for consumption when they mutually helped each other and for religious ceremonies (Panca Yadnya). The

food products made from turtle's meat was not only for consumption for the people who were involved in the traditional activities, but also for *jotan* and *bayuh*. *Jotan* is provided to the guests and relatives, while *bayuh* is provided to those who are respected depending on their social status at the villages.

The turtles killed for Hindu-related ceremonies in Bali is caused by the mythology that *Awatar Wisnu* comes down to the earth in the form of *Badawangnala*/turtle serving as the foundation of Mount Giri Mandara so that the earth will not get sunk. Such a belief has made a turtle's head used as medium of ceremonies.

The factor that is most responsible for the exploitation of turtles is their commercial value. Such a value has led to the fact that the number of turtles killed has exceeded the capacity permitted. It is this that has threatened the conservation of turtles.

In addition to the factors causing turtles to be exploited, there are also some factors causing turtles to be protected at Serangan and Tanjung Bena Villages. Such factors are there has been hegemony from the government through the Act Number 5 of 1990, the rules and regulations number 7 and 8 of 1999, the Bali Governor's Letter of Decision Number 240 of 2000, the legal action taken by the government, the international pressure, and animal loving Non Government Organizations. They have all urged that turtles cannot be killed any more. The socialization of what has been instructed by PHDI concerning scarce animals cannot be neglected. Due to the hegemony, the people have been made to be aware that they should conserve turtles by looking after them in the pools particularly designed for this purpose. In conserving

turtles, the people work together with the government and animal-loving non-government organizations, religious leaders and the leaders of the villages. Moreover, the protection of turtles is included in the Traditional Rules and Regulations of Serangan Traditional Village, reading *Pawos 30 "Penyu lan binatang laut liyanan tur seluiring paksi*. Turtle conservation, which is realized by building pools where turtles are kept, has made the International Community not consider Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages as the ones where turtles are killed any more. They have been considered places where turtles are conserved.

2. Effects of Exploitation and Protection of Turtles

3.1. Effects of Exploitation of Turtles

Economically, exploitation of turtles before 2000 benefited the people at the two villages. By exploiting turtles, they could fulfill their needs. However, the exploitation of turtles exceeding the needs made the government prohibit the trade of turtles, which, in turn, made the people unsatisfied. The reason is that the people were frightened to lose their jobs. Such a fear has been overcome by WWF by approaching the people and giving training courses in economics to those whose profession was trading turtles. Working capital was also provided and cooperation was made with them. Such cooperation was continued by building TCEC on March 16, 2003 at Serangan Village. In addition, WWF also approached the people holistically. The approach was not only limited to those who had the authority to reinforce rules and regulations, but also involved the people to make them aware of conservation. The attempts mentioned above resulted in a change that the food products that used to be

made from turtle's meat have now been made from other materials. Baudrillard (2004) calls such a change commodification, that is, a basic change from the status of commodity into a complex relation between economy, language and ideology of the community.

The effects of turtles on religious activities are that after 2000 the people have found it difficult to find turtles for ceremonies. Therefore, the government has recommended turtles be used for religious ceremonies. However, such a recommendation has resulted in negative effects that turtles have been smuggled without being observed by the parties that have the authority for that. The positive effects have been that turtles are still used for ceremonies. Since 2005, turtles have been used for the upper level ceremonies. The turtles used have not been necessarily the big ones, have only been used as *jatu* (*sarana* = medium), and have not been necessarily many. Foucault (2002: 9) call these effects *discourse*, that is, the appearance of religious awareness resulting from the enriched knowledge and social practices in the form of social awareness of using turtles for religious ceremonies. These effects have contributed to the establishment of the centers where turtles are looked after at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages, which, at the same time, have supplied the turtles for Hindu-related ceremonies.

In tourism, the effects are that at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages the turtles looked after in the man-made pools are also for tourists. Such a protection is packaged in such a way that many stalls and restaurants have been built in those areas. Tourists are interested in this tourist attraction, making the world's view positive.

3.2. Effects of Protection of Turtles

The protection of turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages has been able to raise the people's awareness of protecting turtles. Before 2000, the people exploited turtles in an extractive way (directly taking from the nature), but after 2000, the turtles needed for religious ceremonies have been taken from the pools where they are looked after. The *tukiks* released to the sea have also been taken from the pools. Wallace (1961) call it *Partial equivalence structure*, the interaction between those looking after turtles in the pools and turtles conserving groups with the Balinese community is mutual complementary in nature in treating environment. Then another alternative tourist attraction appears which generates income, makes job opportunities available, regains the local people's reputation, and widens the people's formal and informal cooperative network.

The other effect is related to the environmental rescuing. Many parties have done their best to protect turtles, but the results achieved have not been maximal. The traditional community has applied the traditional law that turtles should be protected. Such a protection is included in the *awig-awig* (traditional law) that traditional institutions should protect turtles. It reads *Palet 5, Indik Druwen Desa, Pawos 29 and 30*. The effect of turtle protection is related to environment, that is, Serangan Village is recalled the island of turtles. The turtles multiplying there are saved. To save such animals is the collective local people's responsibility. The people have implemented what is instructed by the law concerning protection of wild animals.

4. Significance of Exploitation and Protection of Turtles

Significance of Exploitation of Turtles

The exploitation of turtles means welfare, physical and spiritual balance, ecotourism and environmental conservation.

Welfare has something to do with whether what is economically needed by the community is fulfilled or not fulfilled. The significance, in this case, can be denotative and connotative. Denotative significance refers to the community's welfare contributed by the trade of turtles involving fishermen, distributors, boats carrying turtles, traders, agents, and consumers with money as the final objective. Connotative significance refers to the people's habit in managing the natural potentials for their welfare. However, such a significance also damages environment resulting from hyper-commodity, meaning that for welfare the number of turtles killed exceeds the capacity permitted.

Meaningfulness of turtles as the symbol symbolizing the macrocosmos and microcosmos balance can be seen from the *puer* put on *sanggar tawang* symbolizing the earth's foundation. The earth's balance is identical with the man's physical and spiritual balance (microcosmos). That is why turtles are used in Hindu-related religious ceremonies. This means that the turtles killed for religious ceremonies means something or represents something which is immaterial, abstract, idea, quality, signs of process of an object, and so forth (Coulson: 1978. Vol. II. 1696). In this case, turtles killed for religious ceremonies represent something abstract about physical and spiritual balance in Hinduism.

The physical and spiritual balance symbolized by the turtles killed in religious ceremonies is also described in *Siwa Samhita*. It is described that a turtle is

identical with *kurma*. *Kurma* refers to a poison container swallowed by *Siwa* when rotating Mount Mandara Giri. If related to Balinese spirituality/*kedyatmikan*, there is a term *cedoking gulu*. In *Lontar Dadig Karana*, it is called *murda jangkep*, *Ngamurtiang Lingga*. In *Arga Patra*, it is called *ngarmutiang Agni Surya*. In *nasarin swamba* of *Weda Parikrama*, it symbolizes *Omkara*. In *Panca Sarawati*, when *ngenteg linggih* ceremony is conducted, turtle's puer symbolizes *agni* (fire). In *Siwa Linga*, a turtle is identical with *agni* (fire), the priest of the Gods of *Reg Weda Mandala I*. *Mantra I* reads *Agnim ile purohitam, yajnasya deva rivjyam, hotaram ratna dhatamam*, meaning that we worship God as the universe's priest, who activates through eternal law, who looks after and sustains every godly and bright characteristic (Maswinara, 1999: 1).

According to Foucault (1926-1984), the discourse of the exploitation of turtles refers to the relationship between power and knowledge. The higher the people's knowledge about turtles (as the animals that should be protected), the more aware they will be that such animals should be conserved.

The people's awareness at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages of conserving turtles has made ecotourism develop. Such awareness is included in the *Awig-Awig* (traditional law) of Serangan Traditional Village. It is included in Article 30, which reads that turtles belong to the traditional village, and that they should be protected by the Traditional Village itself.

The protection of turtles for ecotourism serves as the response to the world's criticism that turtles are killed at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Traditional Villages. As tourist attraction, the protection of turtles has made the people's way of

thinking and profession change. Connotatively, ecotourism refers to the attempts made by the people at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages to change their predicate from being called killers of turtles to being conservers of turtles (*palemahan*) under the custom's structure inspired by Hinduism.

Meaningfulness of Protection of Turtles

The protection of turtles constitutes the application of the great values of Balinese culture, especially the concept of *Tri Hita Karana* in the subculture of *palemahan*, that is, the balance between man and his environment. The concept of *Bhuta hita, ayua tan masih ring sarwa prani* is always given the priority to keep balance. Therefore, the people have killed turtles for offerings to God (*luwur/hulu*) instead of for consumption and trade (*teben*).

Turtles in Balinese community are still believed as the symbol of sacred animals functioning as the earth's foundation. Therefore, how they are used is arranged through the process of *utpati*, *Stiti*, and *praline*. *Utpati* means eggs are hatched, *stiti* means turtles are looked after and released to the sea, and *praline* means using them for ceremonies as the symbol of balance. The new awareness means that environment should also be well looked after if man, in his life, wants balance, including protecting turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages.

CONCLUSION

The turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages are used for trade, tourism, traditional needs, and Hindu-related ceremonies. The exploitation of turtles before 1999 was influenced by *libido*

economy (libidinal economy). After 2000, the exploitation of turtles has been influenced by the hegemony imposed by the government through legal action. As a result, the people have gradually ceased buying and selling turtles. Next, the community has built pools where turtles are looked after accompanied by the activities of releasing *tukiks* to the sea with the tourists visiting there as the form of ecotourism. In Hindu-related ceremonies, the turtles' heads (*puers*) and the *lawar* made from the turtle's meat are used for supplementing the holy offerings (*banten suci*), especially when the upper level ceremonies are performed. The people have also been used to using the turtle's meat for the custom's needs, that is, for consumption for the guests attending the ceremonies and for *jotan* given to the relatives and the villages' leaders. After 2000, the people's habit in exploiting turtles has changed, that is, by collaborating with the government and non-government organizations, they have started protecting turtles.

The exploitation of turtles at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages have been motivated by various factors such as the habit of consuming turtle's meat, the turtle's symbolic value, someone's social status, and the turtle's commercial value. The economic effects of exploitation and protection of turtles have been that, on one hand, the people have lost their profession by buying and selling turtles, but, on the other hand, they have been able to create job opportunities. The other effect has been that the people have been able to keep the turtles' lives balanced through *Tri Hita Karana*.

The economic significance of turtles to the people at Serangan and Tanjung Benoa Villages has been that the people have not only considered turtles

commercial items, but they have considered them the creatures which should be conserved. The people have also considered the protection of turtles identical with keeping the nature balanced. In other words, man is obliged to sacrifice (*beriyadnya*) for the continuity of the existence of other creatures (including turtles). The change in giving meaningfulness to turtles cannot be separated from the cultural attitude of being embarrassed (*lek/malu*) and maintaining self-esteem (*jengah*). The people have considered the exploitation and protection of turtles the symbol of balance/*sarwa bhutahita*, that is, turtles are not denotative in nature but connotative in nature (as the symbol symbolizing *awatar Wisnu* who saves the earth from being damaged); therefore, turtles should be conserved to keep the nature balanced.

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